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RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA IMMEDIATE 0007  
RUEHKI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE 0002  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA IMMEDIATE 0007  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE 0003  
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE 0004

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 001993

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: GEORGIA MISSILE ATTACK UPDATE -- AUGUST 9

REF: A. TBILISI 1975

[1](#)B. TBILISI 1958

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Mark X. Perry for reasons 1.4(b&d).

#### Summary

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[1](#)1. (C) Speaking at a press conference August 8, Foreign Minister Bezhuashvili maintained the Georgian government's moderate tone in talking about the missile impact on Georgian territory August 6 (reftels). He called for a "group of international experts" to investigate the incident, something the Georgians see as a mechanism that would help them with the investigation, review the evidence, and provide independent objectivity to the findings. An OSCE Mission member has privately indicated to us that he welcomes this inclusive but Georgian-led approach, saying that OSCE has neither the mandate nor the political maneuverability to be able to run an investigation on its own. End Summary.

#### Georgians Call for International Expert Group

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[1](#)2. (C) In a press conference August 8, Foreign Minister Gela Bezhuashvili said Georgia had decided, in coordination with its partners, to "set up a group of international experts and invite all partner countries to designate their own representatives to this group, military or aviation experts who will study thoroughly the evidence made available by the Georgian side." Plans are already underway for international experts to review and assist in the investigation. A team from EUCOM will arrive in Georgia August 10, including an expert on radar and air operations control, and two munitions experts. Deputy Defense Minister Batu Kutelia has the lead in the Georgian government in setting up the international team. So far Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, and perhaps others have offered to participate. The plan is to have the experts meet soon, perhaps as early as Monday, August 13, to begin reviewing the evidence.

#### OSCE Reluctant to Lead

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[1](#)3. (C) Jurgen Schmidt of the OSCE Mission told us August 9 that OSCE was not in a position to lead an investigation of the incident. In the first place, he said, OSCE had no mandate for such a role, and this mandate would have to be expressly granted either by negotiations with the sides in the conflict, or as a result of a decision in Vienna. He said that OSCE saw its role as reporting on this incident as it would any other in the "zone of conflict." He added that,

given the internal politics of OSCE, the organization might not be able to lead an investigation to a satisfactory result, even if the evidence was entirely clear. Schmidt's comments about the limits of OSCE's mandate appeared to echo an August 9 statement by OSCE Chairman-in-Office Moratinos that "The OSCE stands ready to co-operate with the investigation within the framework of its mandate."

#### International Statements Past and Future

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14. (C) Georgian officials have expressed appreciation for the strong Department statement on the incident August 8. Regarding a possible EU statement, Saakashvili advisor Daniel Kunin told Charge August 8 that he understood Portugal was hesitant to issue a statement. Bezhuashvili had spoken to British Minister for Europe Murphy to ask if he could energize the Portuguese, and he was also planning to call Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt. Told by Charge that top officials at NATO believe that Georgia had not asked for a NATO statement, Bezhuashvili said he would clarify with NATO that a statement would be welcomed.

#### A Second Missile?

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15. (C) In his press conference, Bezhuashvili referred to a reported second missile fired by the same planes that fired the one that impacted near Gori. He called on OSCE to "to explore the site where the second missile was dropped. It is the de-facto regime-controlled territory. This site has to be explored thoroughly and relevant conclusions made." Schmidt told us that he considered eyewitness accounts of a second missile to be credible, and that such a missile would have likely impacted in a remote mountainous area of South

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Ossetia.

#### Comment

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16. (C) In consultation with the USG and others, the Georgians appear to be taking a carefully calibrated approach to the investigation, keeping their rhetoric restrained while setting up an investigative mechanism that welcomes international participation without giving the Russians a veto over the final conclusion -- as happened with the investigation of the March 11 attack in Kodori and as could have happened with an OSCE-led investigation of this incident. It remains unclear exactly how the international team of experts would work, whether it would meet and review evidence as a group, or would be more informal, with experts arriving at different times to review evidence with the Georgians. In either case, the Georgians appear eager for international partners in the investigation. In the interest of a thorough investigation, pressure should be brought to bear on the South Ossetians to permit a search for a possible second impact site.

PERRY